REMARKS

Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for the careful consideration given the present application. The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office action, and amended as necessary to more clearly and particularly describe the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the application by the present Amendment.

Claims 1 and 4-5 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Wafer et al. in view of Thompson. For the following reasons, the Examiner's rejection is traversed. First, it is noted that Wafer is directed toward a handle "having a centrally located hub section 14 which is adapted to be detachably connected with the valve stem" Col. 2, lines 63-65. The Wafer handle is adapted to be attached or linked to a similar handle so as to effectively elongate the handle. It is noted that Wafer does not teach "a handle having a proximal end and a distal end, and a longitudinal axis extending between said proximal and distal ends, said proximal end being connected to said valve stem and said handle being operable to rotate said valve member between an open position and a closed position". Rather, as noted previously, Wafer teaches a handle that is attached to a valve stem at a location midway along the handle length.

Moreover, Wafer does not teach or suggest that "said handle distal end defining an opening that is adapted to receive a ratchet handle, and said opening being oriented generally transverse to said handle longitudinal axis". In this regard it is specifically noted that Wafer does not disclose use of a ratchet handle, or any opening that could receive a ratchet handle.

Thomson is cited by the Examiner for teaching a handle that is attached to a valve stem at a proximal end. It is respectfully submitted that, even if the Wafer and Thompson patents are combined as advocated by the Examiner, the present invention would not result. Clearly, neither of the cited references teach or suggest that a distal end of the handle defines "an opening that is adapted to receive a ratchet handle, and said opening being oriented generally transverse to said handle longitudinal axis", as required. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 is requested. Moreover, insofar as the relevant language of claims 4 and 5 are generally identical to that of claim 1, it is considered apparent that the foregoing arguments also apply to patentability of claims 4 and 5. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 4 and 5 based upon the combination of Wafer and Thompson is also requested.

Claims 2 and 3 stand rejected based upon Wafer/Thompson in further view of McMurtrey. The Examiner's rejection is traversed for the following reasons.

The McMurtrey patent does not remove or correct the deficiencies of the Wafer/Thompson patent as it relates to claim 1. More specifically, McMurtrey does not teach that "said handle distal end defining an opening that is adapted to receive a ratchet handle, and said opening being oriented generally transverse to said handle longitudinal axis". Rather, McMurtrey teaches a two-piece jack handle wherein an opening in an end of one handle is adapted to receive the second handle. The McMurtrey opening is aligned with the handle axis, contrary to the requirements of claim 1.

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in a condition for allowance, the Examiner is

invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 18-0160, our Order No. GRO-12525.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Marked-up version of Amendments

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A valve assembly comprising:

a valve body having a rotary valve member and a valve stem extending from said valve body;

a handle having a proximal end and a distal end, and a longitudinal axis extending between said proximal and distal ends, said proximal end being connected to said valve stem and said handle being operable to rotate said valve member between an open position and a closed position;

~~[the improvement comprising:]~~

said handle distal end defining an opening that is adapted to receive a ratchet handle, and said opening being oriented generally transverse to said handle longitudinal axis.

4. (Amended) In combination, an improved valve handle and valve handle extension, said valve handle having a proximal end operable to rotatably drive a valve member and a distal end selectively engageable with said valve handle extension, wherein said valve handle extension is a ratchet handle and said valve handle distal end defines an opening that receives a drive head of said ratchet handle, and wherein said opening extends in a direction that is generally transverse to a length direction of said handle.

5. (Amended) A method for creating additional torque to free a frozen valve, wherein said valve includes a valve body receiving a rotary valve member, a valve stem extending from said rotary valve member and said valve body, and a valve handle having a proximal end connected to said valve stem, ~~[at a proximal end thereof and having]~~ a distal end, and defining a longitudinal axis, comprising the steps of:

providing an opening in said distal end of said valve handle, said opening

extending in a direction transverse to said longitudinal axis and being adapted to receive a drive head of a ratchet handle;

inserting the drive head of the ratchet handle into said valve handle opening;

positioning said ratchet handle in a position to effectively extend a length of said valve handle; and,

applying force to said ratchet handle to force said valve handle in a desired rotational direction.